

# QUARTERLY NEWS LETTER

---

VOLUME XVII

NUMBER 4

---

A Quarter Century at the Huntington Library  
*by Robert O. Schad*

Some Notes on a Proposed Bibliography  
of National History  
*by Wright Howes*

Twenty Disorderly Years  
The Story of the Rounce and Coffin Club  
*by Jake Zeitlin*

SERENDIPITY

NOTES ON PUBLICATIONS :: EXHIBITIONS  
ELECTED TO MEMBERSHIP  
&c. &c.

---

*Published for its members by The Book Club  
of California, 549 Market Street,  
San Francisco*

---



## The Book Club of California

FOUNDED IN 1912, The Book Club of California is a non-profit association of book-lovers and collectors who have a special interest in Pacific Coast history, literature, and fine printing. Its chief aims are to further the interests of book collectors in the West and to promote an understanding and appreciation of fine books.

The Club is limited to seven hundred and fifty members. When vacancies exist membership is open to all who are in sympathy with its aims and whose applications are approved by the Board of Directors. Regular Membership involves no responsibilities beyond payment of the annual dues of \$12.00. Dues date from the month of the member's election.

Members receive the *Quarterly News-Letter* and all parts of the current Keepsake series, *Attention Pioneers!* They have the privilege, but not the obligation, of buying the Club publications which are limited, as a rule, to one copy per member.

### Officers & Directors

|   |  |
|---|--|
| MRS. JOHN I. WALTER, <i>President</i>                         | ALBERT SPERISEN, <i>Vice President</i> |
| CARROLL T. HARRIS, <i>Treasurer</i>                           |  |
| MISS EDITH M. COULTER, <i>Chairman, Publication Committee</i> |  |
| CARL I. WHEAT, <i>Chairman, Keepsake Committee</i>            |  |
| ALBERT SPERISEN, <i>Chairman, Exhibit Committee</i>           |  |
| HOWARD WILLOUGHBY, <i>Chairman, Membership Committee</i>      |  |
| OSCAR LEWIS, <i>Chairman, House and Library Committee</i>     |  |
| LEWIS ALLEN   | GEORGE L. HARDING                      |
| T. M. LILIENTHAL  | JAMES D. HART                          |
| MORGAN A. GUNST   | JOSEPH HENRY JACKSON                   |
|   | ROBERT J. WOODS                        |
|   | WILSON DUPREY, <i>Librarian</i>        |
|   | MRS. ELIZABETH DOWNS, <i>Secretary</i> |

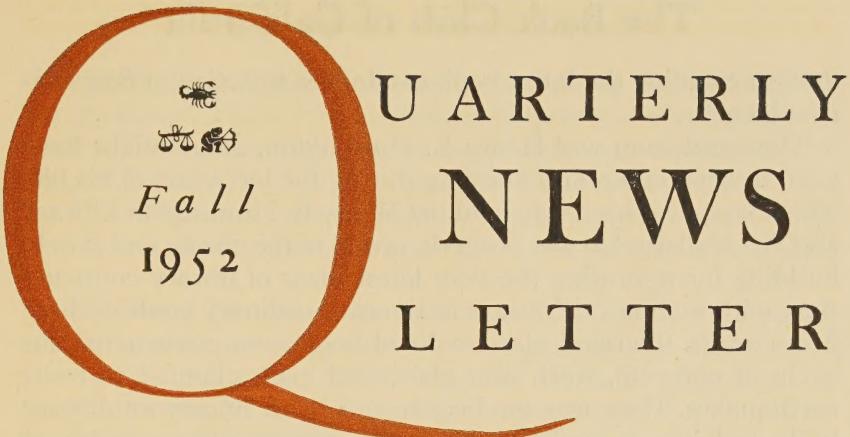
#### *News-Letter Editorial Committee*

DAVID MAGEE

|                   |                    |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| LEWIS ALLEN       | H. RICHARD ARCHER  |
| JACKSON BURKE     | JAMES D. HART      |
| GEORGE L. HARDING | FLORENCE S. CHESSE |
| W. J. DUDDLESON   | WARREN UNNA        |

---

Subscription to the *Quarterly News-Letter* is included in the dues. Extra copies, when available, are sold to members at 50c each.



## A Quarter Century

at the Huntington Library

by Robert O. Schad\*

ON a morning in the middle 1920's, a tall gentleman of military bearing, with handsome white mustaches, strolled from his mansion—filled with priceless British Eighteenth Century portraits—across a broad California lawn which, but for the luxuriant tropical plantings bordering it, might have been that of an English country estate. His objective was a building of classical design which housed his library. He entered through the bronze door and quietly passed through a long and high room in which exhibit cases lined the panelled walls surrounding four massive reading tables. In the center of the north wall, a large vault door led to mysterious regions; guarding it, behind a mammoth desk, two librarians engaged intently in bibliographical work. Nodding pleasantly to his staff and taking care to avoid disturbing the scholar who was seated at one of the tables, he made his way to a spacious room off the east entrance, where he settled down at an old-fashioned roll-top

\*Curator of rare books and administrator of exhibitions at the Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery.

## The Book Club of California

desk to examine the latest book catalogues to arrive at San Marino Ranch.

The gentleman was Henry E. Huntington, as he might have been discovered on any morning during the last years of his life. The library was his newly founded Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery. He was properly proud of the chaste and stately building incorporating the very latest ideas of library construction, with such novel features as the extraordinary vault of three floors and a thousand glass-enclosed bookcases, constructed entirely of concrete, steel, and glass, and even planned to resist earthquakes. Here was the largest and safest library vault ever built and it was made to house the greatest concentration of Anglo-American bibliographical treasures assembled in modern times.

Later, on such a morning, during a conference with his curators, the owner might perhaps ask for information about the reader he had observed: who was he, what books or manuscripts was he using, and, most important of all, how was he profiting from the use of the library? Not a surprising interest in view of the fact that this was not a dilettante, an amateur scholar, or even a conventional book-collector, but a hard-headed, practical business man who had made millions by using his native shrewdness, tremendous energy, and indomitable will, and then had spent millions on his library. Henry Huntington loved his books and enjoyed buying them, handling them, and putting them at the disposal of scholars. The one way in which he could not fully benefit from his treasures was in using them as scholars could, and so he wanted assurance that his efforts had not been in vain and that all he had put into his library in time, thought, and money would one day be justified by the fruits of other men's work.

The story of Mr. Huntington's travel over the road from the purely possessive satisfaction of acquiring rarities that others could not find or afford to the enlightened concept of a library that would provide the source materials for the study of Anglo-American civilization is fascinating but too long to be followed here. It was not the journey of a year or even a decade and it was not accomplished without the counsel and guidance of wise friends such as his cousin, Archer M. Huntington, and his friend,

## Quarterly News Letter

George E. Hale, both of whom he named as members of the library board. These men and others helped to fire Huntington's mind with a great ambition to create a library comparable to long-established English and American institutions; to place it on the Pacific Coast where scholarly libraries were few and far between; and, finally, to make it his gift to the state he loved, California.

Considering his passion for buying and the length of his purse, one of the most amazing qualities displayed by Mr. Huntington was his faithful adherence to his plan. He had determined to confine himself to English and American material and seldom did he stray. True, he bought several collections of incunabula, which, combined, made his library the strongest in that field outside Europe—about 5,200 titles—but he did it in the knowledge that Fifteenth Century English scholars had to rely on the continental presses for learned works, lacking a scholarly press of their own.

The chief glory of the Huntington Library is its collection of English books printed between 1475 and 1641. Its nucleus was formed by Mr. Huntington in New York with purchases from dealers and at auction during the years 1900 to 1911. Then, in a few strokes, he had acquired the lion's share of the Robert Hoe library, the Beverly Chew and E. Dwight Church collections *en bloc*, and a large portion of the Huth library. The Bridgewater House library in England, an accumulation of three centuries, brought him a wonderful group of first editions of Shakespeare, Marlowe, Jonson, and Kyd. The Duke of Devonshire next parted with the incomparable Kemble-Devonshire plays and the Chatsworth Caxtons. The entire Frederick R. Halsey library, one of the greatest in America, joined the Huntington, and the Britwell Court collection went to the auction block with the Huntington agent bidding to buy. Within twenty years, Mr. Huntington had had unprecedented opportunities not likely to recur and had seized them all. A combination of luck and courage gave him a great Early English library, unsurpassed in Shakespeare, rich in Caxtons, amazingly strong in English drama.

During the exciting early days when every important auction yielded its share to the Huntington and every important offering was thoroughly checked by Mr. Huntington and his staff, Eng-

## The Book Club of California

lish books of a period later than 1640 and Americana were not neglected. It was not too much for this man of decision to authorize his librarian to cable to London for the contents of an entire dealer's catalogue. He knew that time was against him and the larger the lot he could obtain in one operation the better, always provided it fitted in. In the Church and Halsey libraries, he had acquired superb Americana of the periods of discovery, exploration, and colonization; and the quality and extent of the collection of Americana which he ultimately amassed with this as his major starting point show the efficacy of his system of using other men's work; by consolidating other libraries and filling in the gaps, he arrived at his goal.

As he brought to his storerooms and shelves his great accumulation of printed sources, Mr. Huntington was adding with equal enthusiasm and rapidity a remarkable collection of manuscript material, ranging, chronologically, from the Battle Abbey papers, which dated from the Eleventh Century, to manuscripts of Jack London's novels. An intervening variety encompassed such groups as Middle English texts, Medieval and Renaissance illuminated manuscripts, Elizabethan literary and historical manuscripts, Revolutionary War orderly books, Shelley notebooks, American journals of overland journeys, and the great mass of English archival material composing such collections as the Stowe and the Hastings-Huntingdon papers.

On May 23, 1927, Henry Huntington died, leaving in the institution which he had created in 1919, 130,000 printed volumes and uncounted numbers of manuscripts. The shelves in the huge vault were full, and thousands of volumes stood in the aisles. An entire basement of packing cases remained unopened because there was no space on the shelves for the contents. The collector had been busy buying almost to the day of his death. A quarter of a century has passed since then.

The library is often asked whether it is still increasing its collections. The answer is an emphatic "yes." Both rarities and reference books are being augmented at the rate of 3,000 to 5,000 volumes annually; it is difficult to fix an average rate for manuscript accessions.

Since 1927, the Californiana and Far Western collection has increased more than any other part of the library owing, in part,

## Quarterly News Letter

to the interest of the Friends of the Huntington Library and to grants from the Rockefeller Foundation in support of a Huntington program of regional studies of the Southwest: California, Nevada, Utah, New Mexico, and Arizona. These collections have been largely augmented through the efforts of the librarian, Leslie E. Bliss, who has travelled thousands of miles collecting material by gift, purchase, and acquisition of photostatic or microfilm copy. The Rockefeller grant, administered by Robert G. Cleland, has also extended the library's program of fellowships and grants-in-aid to scholars by providing funds for awards in this field, supplementing the library's own fellowship program.

Of recent acquisitions in various fields, only a few can be mentioned here, but they should serve to underscore the quality of recent accessions: the Merrymount Press collection (obtained when the press was discontinued); the balance of the Jack London papers; the Mary Austin manuscripts and correspondence; the papers and letters of Zoe Akin; a collection of official military material known from its place of origin as the "Fort Vancouver Papers." Gifts, as well as purchases, now augment the collections; of these, we mention only one as being a lately acquired treasure of more than ordinary importance and of especial interest to Californians—Robert Louis Stevenson's manuscript journal on which is based his *Silverado Squatters*, the gift of Edwin J. Beinecke of New York.

The acquisitions and the increase in their use have necessitated three major additions to the building since 1927. First came a new reading room to permit the use of the original reading-exhibition room solely for exhibitions; then new manuscript quarters and a reference wing with space for readers and secondary books. Completed last year was another wing which provides two underground floors for book storage and contains a bomb-resistant vault for the protection of the chief treasures in time of emergency.

The readers who once sat underfoot among the exhibitions, two or three at a time, now fill an entire room. The year ending June 30, 1952, established a new record in their use of the library, when registrations totaled over 700. Mostly professors on a busman's holiday, some with Huntington grants, but the greater part on their own initiative, they come from colleges and universities all over the world.

## The Book Club of California

The library's publications, of which more than seventy-five titles and the *Quarterly*, reflect the fruits of their labors, as well as the productions of the institution's own research staff. The library's director, John E. Pomfret, is therefore especially interested in the program of publication.

The quarter-century milestone since Mr. Huntington's death marks another record. This lies in the number of photographic units made during the year in the library's laboratory: 171,000, of which 3,000 were photographs, 21,000 photostats, and 147,000 microfilm frames. Some of these were for the Huntington collections; others, for scholars and other libraries or for the public.

In usefulness and continued growth, in its program of research and publication, the Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery is functioning according to the plan laid down by its founder, liberally interpreted by the trustees. It operates entirely on its endowment, thereby making it a true gift to the people of California, without burden to the taxpayers. One is reminded of a remark attributed to Mr. Huntington toward the end of his life, when he was asked if he had ever contemplated an autobiography. "No! I do not want that. This library will tell the story. It is the reward of all the work I have ever done and the realization of much happiness."

## Some Notes on a Proposed Bibliography of National History *by Wright Howes\**

TO readers of a periodical of this character having for the subject sympathy and understanding, a bibliographical plan may be explained with minimum difficulty. The idea can be conveyed by answering three queries: What is being done? Why is it thought desirable that it be done? How is it being done?

---

\*Noted Chicago bookseller and bibliophile, at present holder of a Fellowship in Bibliography at the Newberry Library. An abbreviated version of this article has appeared in the *Antiquarian Bookman*.

## Quarterly News Letter

Those three points will be considered in order. But before doing so, acknowledgment must be made that this undertaking has been made possible only through the reference facilities of the Newberry Library and the financial aid extended to the compiler by its trustees in granting a Fellowship in Bibliography for this specific project. It must furthermore be explained—to make understandable the necessity for certain compromises and limitations (both in scope and treatment)—that this experiment is scheduled for completion three years from start of operations. In actual working time, this will be one and a half years, as the two persons engaged on it—myself and the competent assistant supplied by the library—work half days only. A longer time would be preferable, of course, but just isn't practicable. In a commendable cause, limited servitude is endurable; but anyone—even an infatuated bibliophile—balks at indeterminate bondage, or a lifetime at the galleys. At the expiration, then, of the period specified, the curtain drops.

*Point One*—What is being attempted and the subject covered.

Briefly, the plan is to compile a selective, though reasonably comprehensive, reference tool offering essential bibliographical data concerning books—genuinely significant or useful, and not too common or commercially valueless—relating to the history of that portion of this continent comprising the present United States: books printed anywhere, in any language, within the last two and a half centuries (1700 to 1950), with emphasis on those having wide or national, rather than narrow, limited, or local, appeal.

The necessity for the major limitations has been explained. To determine their effect, the extent to which they are legitimately innocuous or regrettably harmful, they should be examined separately.

A physical limitation operates to exclude both oversized and undersized productions. This is a compilation strictly of books. Works extending to over five or six volumes are considered sets of books and will rarely be admitted. At the other extreme, pamphlets containing less than twelve leaves (twenty-three pages) will be arbitrarily held to be less than books and will be ordinarily excluded, along with broadsides and broadsheets, as tracts only. This ruling sacrifices some items otherwise acceptable, but

## The Book Club of California

such opuscules, though usually rare, are more often than not of slight, ephemeral, or strictly local interest and their infrequent appearance tends to make information concerning them equally infrequent. Exceptions will be made of those of paramount significance, of those enlarged to normal size in later editions, and of those whose pagination deficit is made up by inclusion of maps or plates, these being counted as leaves.

A geographical limitation requires that entries relate to affairs concerning those parts of the Republic lying within its continental confines. Books on Alaska will thus be included; those concerning our insular possessions will be ignored. The only extraterritorial activities conceded will be those admitted on the principle of following the Flag: naval and whaling operations and army movements—in Canada, Mexico, or elsewhere—in wars with those countries.

A subject limitation excludes all books not fundamentally historical in a strictly orthodox and etymological sense. They must describe, deal with, or throw light upon United States affairs or events in a serious, deliberately considered manner. This winnows from the wheat much chaff: multitudes of emotional sermons, orations, etc., along with all poetry, drama, and fiction. Though dealing with, based on, or having as background, actual events, their interest is essentially literary; they are not primarily concerned with facts. A further, subsidiary, and less sweeping subject limitation—in emphasizing books having national rather than local interest—provides escape from myriads of town and county annals, as only those particularly rare or meritorious will have to be included.

The most severe limitation—the chronological one—admitting only books printed after 1700 is necessary but highly regrettable. A national bibliography, even a selective one, should be properly rounded, should encompass the full 450-year sweep of our historical records, from Cabot, Verrazzano, Spanish explorers in Florida and the Southwest, Champlain, Hudson, and Drake. This bibliography, then, covering only a little over half of the historic period can lay no claim to completeness; it will constitute, in fact, only what must be considered as a volume two. However, in the time allotted, full coverage could only be achieved at too great a sacrifice in other respects. The compiler would have to

## Quarterly News Letter

content himself with such a thin, skimpy treatment as would result in a mere high-spot enumeration of notable rarities only, serving no really useful general reference purpose. Hence, the early period of Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century cradle books was abandoned in favor of concentrating on a more uncompromised adequacy of treatment for books of the last 250 years. Better half a loaf than none; better a chronologically truncated but useful bibliography than one attempting all and accomplishing nothing. There are cogent consolations for this enforced decision. It is in the later period that the vast majority of our book-buying population—collectors, libraries, and antiquarian booksellers—are chiefly interested; books on that period are far more frequently bought and sold; information concerning them more constantly required. Furthermore, not only do books of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries appear less commonly, but concerning them adequate bibliographical data is more readily available, far more available than for books of the Nineteenth Century.

The limitation as to comparative rarity of entries is necessary and well warranted. Too-common books should not unrestrainedly clutter the pages of a selective bibliography, creating monotonous stretches of unrelieved mediocrity. To determine qualification in this respect, commercial value must be utilized as the yardstick. A price level maintained by a given title consistently through the years is a safe gauge both as to its rarity and its intrinsic merit. If Eighteenth Century books are required to have a value of \$20.00, and if Nineteenth Century ones must be worth at least \$10.00, not many worthy aspirants will be kept out, not many worthless ones will sneak in.

Only as a result of the foregoing specific limitations, along with others stemming from the elastic general privilege enjoyed by its selective character—such as favoring primary over secondary sources and omitting periodical publications, almanacs, legal reports, charters, constitutions, official documents, technical treatises, etc.—could this task be accomplished. Though thus narrowed in scope, the compilation should still prove useful. To ease any doubt as to whether the time allotted will suffice, it may be added that of a total of approximately 12,000 entries indicated by a preliminary estimate as satisfactory for the object intended, over

## The Book Club of California

6,000 have been completed in half the set period; an equal number should be processed in the time still remaining. Furthermore, effort is directed towards first completing items of greater importance; those unentered when operations cease, will, therefore, be only of a relatively minor character, their omission of no grave concern.

Assuming that the inventory just described is wisely selected and that the bibliographical data furnished will be reliable, the answer to our *Point Two*—Why is it thought desirable that it be made?—is almost self evident and can be dealt with briefly.

Seventy-five or a hundred years ago, the interest of our collectors—Barlow, Brinley, Brown, Lenox, and the rest—was in Americana, in its true, its widest sense: printed material relating not only to the United States, but to any part of the Western Hemisphere. To meet the uncircumscribed needs of that time, a work like Sabin's was forced to attempt the impossible—to embrace books on American activities from the first voyage of Columbus and through a geographical range extending from pole to pole. Since that time, slowly but continually, collecting interest here has narrowed, until, today, practically no individual collects Americana in that unrestricted sense.

The typical collector, at present,—representing a large majority of at least ninety per cent, as any dealer knows—is exclusively interested in what was to the Nineteenth Century collector of only incidental interest: he limits his buying strictly to material relating to the United States; generally, even, to some specific section of it, some particular period or phase. Seldom does his interest become even national; practically never does it extend beyond our territorial borders—to Canada, Mexico, or other American republics. He still calls himself a collector of Americana, but he really isn't. He is a collector of only a small portion of Americana. He is—to coin a more specific and less misleading word—a collector of *U. S.-iana*. We needn't enter here into the causes which brought about this revolutionary shift in collecting interest, nor into the relative merits of a hemispherical as opposed to a purely national interest. We need consider only what has happened, the fact accomplished, which is that for books strictly confined to United States affairs, there now exists a widespread, extremely active, and growing demand; that there is, therefore,

## Quarterly News Letter

an undeniable desirability for some single, separate, special bibliographical guide covering such books. Inasmuch as no such guide now exists, should one not be made available? Canada, Mexico, and many South American republics have such specific works for their Canadiana, Mexicana, etc.; why not one for this great country? Why not a bibliography of *U. S.-iana*?

And now to *Point Three*—and last—showing how the job is being done, mechanics of entry treatment, and bibliographical data supplied.

As restricted time has limited scope and selection—economic considerations have dictated frugality in the matter of space. Bibliographical information will be confined to essentials only.

Arrangement, following traditional dictionary pattern, will be alphabetical by author; if author is unknown, by a proper name—or of either a place or a person appearing conspicuously in the title—otherwise, by the first substantive word.

Entry treatment will accord pretty much with established practice, giving in order: author, title, publication place and date, followed by approximate dimensional size and collation.

Titles will be shortened by omitting words, but never at the beginning of the title, and never to the extent of rendering its identity doubtful.

Publication places, when prolific publishing centers, will frequently be abbreviated—as *B* for Boston, *L* for London, *P* for Paris, etc.

Publication dates will be entered invariably in Arabic figures.

Size of volumes will be indicated: by capital letters *F*, *Q*, *O*, and *D*—for folios, quartos, octavos and duodecimos—and in the usual manner for smaller books. All of these dimensional terms will be intended to convey only relative or approximate ideas; they will not be based on signature-gathering or strict measurement.

Collations will include the number of pages, maps, and plates, and any other data requisite for establishing the correct physical integrity of the book proper. Bindings—whether cloth, boards, or wrappers—not being a strictly integral part of the book itself, but merely its protective covering apparatus, will not be gone into, unless, as in the case of some pamphlets, wrappers are included by the printer in his pagination.

There will be no rigid rule as to the inclusion of later editions,

## The Book Club of California

reprints, or translations into languages other than the original. They will be given to a considerable extent and frequently with collations, but only when deemed necessary or very desirable.

Value symbols: Lower case letters *a*, *b*, *c*, *d*, and *dd* will be the only novelty introduced. These will follow immediately after collations and will indicate the general or relative grade or rating of the item: a composite of its rarity, importance, demand for, and commercial market value. This device economizes space, offers relief from the monotonous repetition of "rare," "very rare," etc., and affords some, but necessarily indefinite, idea of relative dollar values—"a" books being worth from \$10.00 to \$100, "b" books from \$100 to \$300, "c" books from \$300 to \$600, "d" books from \$600 to \$1000, and "dd" books, any amount from \$1000 to the utmost limit in costliness, whatever that may be. Locations of copies rated "b" or over will be entered, when known, but confined to two repositories only. To illustrate briefly the treatment explained, the following entry is appended:

PATTIE, JAMES O. *Personal narrative . . . during an expedition from St. Louis through the vast regions between that place and the Pacific ocean. . . .* Ed. by Timothy Flint. *Cin* [John H. Wood] 1831. O 300 5pls. d AA —reissued, from unsold sheets of above, with new t-p, *Cin* [E. H. Flint] 1833. [In this issue are found 4 variant copyright readings, viz: by Wood in 1831, by Wood in 1833, by Flint in 1831, by Flint in 1833.] b —for pirated issue see Bilson, B., *Hunters of Kentucky*.

Second overland journey to California, first over the route taken, with adventures incredible had they not been substantiated by later investigations.

## Twenty Disorderly Years

### The Story of the Rounce and Coffin Club

by Jake Zeitlin \*

**I**T would be less than true to say that there was no seriousness in their minds when the four young men, who founded the Rounce and Coffin Club, met on October 28, 1931. If our

---

\*Poet, publisher, bookseller, and one of the disorderly founders of the Rounce & Coffin Club.

## Quarterly News Letter

club has survived and flourished, however, I think we may owe it to that leaven of good humor which has always infected us and preserved us from any notions of lofty aim or manifest destiny or the dreary dullness of duties performed out of a sense of obligation.

The thread of continuity which runs through the vicissitudes of twenty years has been a bright and tangled one. From gathering to gathering we have had the remembrance of meetings begun in a spirit of horseplay and ended in jovial disorder. In the interval we have managed to accomplish whatever needed to be done because it has pleased us to do so. Somewhere between the region of the glum-faced doers of good and the totally undisciplined hoodlums lies a pleasant land, where men accomplish not too little and not too much, but enough to make them feel that their years have not been wasted; and it is into this country we seem to have wandered. The first minute book of our club is, appropriately, a dummy containing the title page of the 1931 edition of Sarah Bixby Smith's *Adobe Days*. It was within reach when we met that rainy night. Grant Dahlstrom, Ward Ritchie, Gregg Anderson, and I, under the gentle patronage of Arthur Ellis, had in common an admiration for good printing and an ambition to do our part in producing it. We had decided that a little club would be a good way to meet regularly and share our interests and discoveries. Rene & Jean's on West Sixth Street was just starting. The French table d'hôte it served was bounteous and it was cheap. We dined and repaired to my bookshop, where we proceeded to elect Grant Dahlstrom president and Ward Ritchie secretary. Grant's characteristic self-effacement seems to have fastened itself upon his office, for we did not once thereafter have a formal presiding officer. True, our records disclose that Robert Schad was on September 12, 1941, made president, but he too by his characteristic tact defaulted from any exercise of the gavel. Ward Ritchie remained as secretary until September 29, 1935. The minute books reflect that he kept the minutes and accounts of dues received with none too zealous but adequate attention.

We were first moved to call ourselves the Thistle Club, but fortunately for the lisping maids who might mention us lightly, we managed after serious debate, well larded with boos, to wander into a meeting of wine fuddled minds upon the name of

## The Book Club of California

Rounce and Coffin. So it has remained, a symbol of that macabre compound of near wit and near erudition, which still shows itself whenever our members gather.

Our second meeting was held on November 19th when we brought Saul Marks in as a guest. And on that occasion we moyed that Saul and Paul Landacre be invited to join us. It was not until April 20, 1932, that our patron and elder counsellor, Arthur Ellis met with us at Saul Marks' shop. There was a gentle way about him which led us without urging and which has cemented him in our memories as a friend and exemplar. He was the kind of man who refreshes the stream of printing ever so often by bringing to it the enthusiasm of the learned amateur. On this occasion too, Gregg Anderson was elected custodian. His burden consisted of three printed announcements and one keepsake. Gregg Anderson was the purest spirit, the most knowing and discriminating among us. He was orderly and unwavering in his purpose and the most artistically sincere of printers. Without him our club might have faltered and gone into a glimmering oblivion in the period between its beginning and the war years. His spartan disapproval was not to be lightly courted and I have no doubt that his regular letters during the period when he apprenticed with Grabhorn and Updike spurred us into maintaining a continuity of association. If his untimely death in France had not deprived us of him, I have no doubt we would be engaging in works of greater dimensions and consequence.

This is not intended to be a history of the Rounce and Coffin Club. Its archives are now preserved at the William Andrews Clark Library, where they await the attentions of some would-be Ph.D. For this occasion I shall only brush lightly by some of the landmarks as they appear to my memory and the gleanings I have done in our files.

Grant Dahlstrom it was, who first proposed the undertaking which aside from pleasant fellowship has been our chief justification. It was he who suggested the Annual Western Books Exhibition and he must now be as astonished as anyone else to see how well it has continued. Gregg Anderson drew up our first invitation to western printers and in it he set forth a few standards which although simple, are exacting and have guided our juries in selecting what may well be the best annual showing of fine

## Quarterly News Letter

bookmaking in America. Our first exhibition was held in 1938 and has continued except for an interruption during the war period of 1942–1946. In 1948, the American Institute of Graphic Arts held a retrospective exhibition of 100 books selected by our members from among all those exhibited through the years 1938–1948.

We have no certain way of knowing what the influence of our annual selection has been, but it has been our endeavor to encourage the maintenance of the high standards set forth by Gregg Anderson in our first call and to give recognition to those printers who have sought to achieve the book beautiful within the conditions of our time.

Our second secretary, Roland Baughman, kept our books and accounts in sufficient order through the years 1936–1945. If we occasionally found grounds for fancied grievance at his lackadaisical ways, we blamed it on the other-worldliness of his seclusion among the rare books and librarians at San Marino and upon his devotion to the ephemeral productions of the Grey Bow Press. The unseemly and immoderate demonstration of joy which celebrated his departure from our midst to become keeper of rare books at Columbia University was only our way of indicating that we regretted his leaving and wished him well in the new custodianship which he has since fulfilled with distinction and credit to his disorderly companions.

The tinted glow of time lends color to the memory of many of our meetings. Some were held in dignified and honorable surroundings. Others are the more cherished because of their questionable auspices. I particularly treasure the remembrance of an evening when we met in Ward Ritchie's print shop in South Pasadena to partake of spaghetti and red wine and to produce a memorial keepsake for Arthur Ellis. There must have been six of us and Ritchie's ample ration of spaghetti left only room for gargantuan libations of the most insidious red ink that ever was trod from the grape. We then advanced to our endeavor. I wrote in illegible letters what then seemed a noble tribute. Paul Landacre sat himself down to engrave in wood the initial. Grant Dahlstrom and Saul Marks performed a feat of typesetting never before witnessed. In the light of two guttering candles, holding one type stick, they crossed arms and to the time of some

## The Book Club of California

symphonic record proceeded to set the type four-handed in a single stick. Ritchie prepared the forms and inked the press. Meanwhile the jug passed round among us. Landacre finished his initial and all might have gone well except for the exuberance of Marks who, having abandoned his part of the composition to Ritchie and having consulted the liquid oracle, decided to pie the type. It became my duty to restrain him, whereupon, I endeavored to bounce him back upon the spring mattress that served as Ritchie's couch. The elastic quality of the springs was our undoing. For with each fall upon them Marks would bounce back Anteus-like upon his feet and charge among the typesetters. The evening ended in a shambles of spaghetti, red wine, pied type and printer's ink with no keepsake to our credit but the memory of a magnificent and joyous catastrophe. The beautiful initial which Landacre carved has graced one of our announcements, and I hope it will be resurrected by one of our printers to illuminate this anecdote.

Perhaps our most perilous crisis occurred on the occasion in 1948, when Schad, Hoffman, and I presented a set of by-laws for adoption by the club. How the opponents of organized procedure filibustered this proposal and were finally overcome, as well as the later vagaries to which fate submitted it, have been recorded by our secretary H. Richard Archer in the printed product. Having been duly adopted and set into print, it remains our formal testament more observed in the breach than otherwise. The above-mentioned Archer became our secretary in 1946 and has since borne the burden with more good taste, diplomacy and thoroughness than we deserve. He has organized and conserved our records and stock of keepsakes, has cajoled our printers into producing notices of meetings, has provided us with that thin thread of order which runs through the disorder of our gatherings and has furnished us with dinner sherry of a vastly finer if less intoxicating quality than the vino of Ritchie's South Pasadena days.

Precedent requires that an essay of this nature take cognizance of the future as well as of the past. Has the Rounce and Coffin a future? That is the question and we perhaps can best consider it in the light of one of our past meetings. On a certain occasion some three years ago, we had as guest of honor (perhaps one who associates with us may be so termed)—a distinguished gen-

## Quarterly News Letter

tleman and former president of the A.I.G.A. He had spoken for about ten minutes before we realized that he had come before us with a serious purpose. We were so stunned by this man with a message of the great social role and obligation of printing that we neglected to accord him our usual courtesy of interruption and irreverence. For once in its history our club sat silent for more than an hour while the gentleman informed us about printing and wended his carefully thought-out way towards the conclusion that we could only fulfill our obligations if we merged ourselves into a larger, better conducted and more dignified organization. An embarrassing silence followed his conclusion and it was with great difficulty that we finally attempted to explain why we could not consider his proposal. We have been meeting pleasantly for twenty years without too much definition of purpose or code of principles. We have made our jokes, told our stories, chaffed each other and our guests and have only required of one who comes to us that he should have a good sense of humor and good taste. We have been forthright in our evaluations of printing and books as well as of wine and men. Quite a few who have come into our midst have dropped out because their interest in what concerns us was not lasting or sincere or because they had no other common bond with us. When there have been jobs to do we have done them without thought of credit or praise. Our one condition of active membership has been that every member should at least once each year produce some evidence of his creative ability, or should otherwise serve in the work of the club.

This is how we should continue. If we can go on meeting in the same spirit of good workmanship, good temper, good taste [sic], and good humor, we Rounce and Coffiners can say with assurance:

“To hell with the future!”

### ¶Serendipity

THE NEWBERRY LIBRARY figures again (see Wright Howes' article) in this issue of the *Quarterly News-Letter*, with an invitation to join in a publishing venture. The library plans to issue a series of writing-books in facsimile. From its fine collection of calligraphica, the library has chosen for its first title the very rare 1525

## The Book Club of California

edition of the *Opera di Giovannantonio Tagliente*. The booklet will contain a complete 28-page facsimile as well as a biographical and bibliographical introduction. The price will be \$1.75 and a discount of 20% will be allowed on orders for five or more copies. This low cost will prevail only if 300 subscriptions are obtained.

Since receiving the announcement of this interesting publication, the Club has heard from Mr. James M. Wells, custodian of the Wing Foundation of the Newberry Library, that subscriptions have already exceeded 600!

There must be many members of the Club who will want to own Tagliente's book and its successors as they appear. Those interested may order from Mr. James Wells, Facsimile Writing-Book Series, The Newberry Library, Chicago 10, Illinois.

Another library publication—and closer to home—is *The Indians of Southern California in 1852. The B. D. Wilson Report and a Selection of Contemporary Comment*. Edited by John Walton Caughey. This important book is published by the Huntington Library at \$3.50. Orders may be sent to your local bookstore or directly to the Publications Office, Huntington Library, San Marino 9, Calif.

There was a generous response to the Club's plea for reference books to add to its library (see the last issue of the *Quarterly News-Letter*), but there are still many gaps to be filled. Any books dealing bibliographically with printing and the West are urgently needed. So far, among others, we have been given both a Grabhorn and a Nash bibliography. This is a wonderful start. But it is only a start. The aim is to build up so complete a collection of reference books that members can always solve their bibliographical problems by a visit to 549 Market Street.

\* \* \* \* \*

FORTHCOMING PUBLICATIONS: *I Shall Always Love the West, Impressions of the Incomparable Anna Pavlova*, by J. Paget-Fredericks. The author deals with the dancer's several visits to California. The book will be illustrated with action sketches. If you write to Lawton Kennedy, the printer of the volume, he will gladly send you the handsome brochure announcing publication. His address is: 343 Front Street, San Francisco 11, California. . . . *ABC For Book-Collectors* by John Carter (Knopf, \$3.00) is a practical book in dictionary form dealing with the words and phrases commonly used in book-collecting. It should prove of great value to the be-

## Quarterly News Letter

ginning collector and to librarians who get asked the damnedest questions. . . . Joseph Henry Jackson's anthology, *The Western Gate, A San Francisco Reader* (Farrar Straus and Young, \$4.75), is just off the press. Here is a collection of fact and fiction which should please all San Franciscans and those who love the city but who can only enjoy it vicariously.

### ¶ A Protest

THE CLUB has learned recently that a commercial publisher is intending to reprint Robert E. Cowan's *Bibliography of the History of California*, issued by the Club in 1914 as its first publication. The following is an excerpt from a letter written from the Board of Directors to those concerned:

"The directors feel that they would not be properly discharging their responsibility to the members and would be setting a questionable precedent if they approved the issuance of this work in the manner and form proposed.

"Because the original copyright has expired and application for its renewal was not made, the Club is in no legal position to prevent a reprinting of the text. However, it can, and does, refrain from taking any action that might be construed as approving the project.

"The directors recognize that, because of the present rarity and cost of the original edition, a new printing of the text would be welcomed in many quarters. However, they can see no valid justification for a commercial publisher appropriating the typographical design of the original edition, which was done by John Henry Nash on the Club's order and paid for by it."

### ¶ Notes on Publications

THE CURRENT YEAR promises to be an active one so far as publications are concerned. Two titles bearing the Club imprint—*The Coppa Murals* and Stevenson's *La Porte de Maleroit*—have already appeared, and the announcement of the third—*Kelmscott, Doves, and Ashendene*—will be in the hands of members before this issue of the *Quarterly* reaches them.

This forthcoming volume—it will be published September 15—is one that should prove of particular interest to Club members, for it deals with a subject that cannot fail to appeal to all students and collectors of modern fine printing. In it are brought together for the first time in an appropriate setting a series of essays, letters, and other papers, written by such eminent authorities as William

# The Book Club of California

Morris, T. J. Cobden-Sanderson, and C. H. St. John Hornby, and bearing on the founding, purposes, and methods of the three great English private presses: the Kelmscott, Doves, and Ashendene.

Edited, with an informed and highly readable introduction by Will Ransom, this handsome, 200-page volume has been designed and printed at the Ward Ritchie Press. It is being issued in two limited editions, one of which will be distributed to members of the Club, and the other, bearing a separate imprint, to those belonging to the New York collectors' society, The Typophiles.

Members wishing this uncommonly attractive publication will avoid possible disappointment by placing their orders reasonably soon, for the present indications are that the small edition of 300 copies will not remain long on hand. Cost is set at \$5.50 plus taxes (3% for California residents; 3½% for San Francisco residents.)

## C Attention, Pioneers!

THE CLUB'S *KEEPSAKE* series for the current year, which bears the hortatory title given at the head of this paragraph, is now two-thirds finished, eight of the twelve parts having been completed and sent out to the membership. The remaining four parts are in the hands of the Greenwood Press, printer of the series, and will—barring unforeseen complications—be ready for distribution well before the end of the year.

## C Club Office Has New Hours

OFFICE HOURS at the Club are now 1:00 to 9:00 on Mondays, 2:00 to 5:00 on Tuesdays through Fridays. The Club is closed on Saturdays. The Monday evening opening was inaugurated at the request of several members, who feel that with many downtown San Francisco stores remaining open then, they would like to combine their shopping and book-browsing on the same evenings.

## C Elected to Membership

*The following have been elected to membership since the Summer issue of the News-Letter:*

| Member                      | Address               | Sponsor                |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Frederick W. Beinecke       | New York City, N. Y.  | Charles Eberstadt      |
| Miss Elizabeth Jane Brown   | Oakland               | J. R. Brown            |
| G. R. Edwards               | Fresno                | R. E. Combs            |
| Judge Sherrill Halbert      | Modesto               | F. F. Thomas, Jr.      |
| Hayden L. Hews              | Riverside             | Mrs. Elizabeth Downs   |
| Lt. Col. Parker M. Holt     | Ft. Leavenworth, Kan. | George W. Leistner     |
| Frank Hubbell               | Burbank               | Glen Dawson            |
| Dr. Salvatore P. Lucia      | San Francisco         | Miss Constance Spencer |
| Jim MacDonald               | San Francisco         | James W. Elliott       |
| Robert B. MacMakin          | Palo Alto             | Oscar Lewis            |
| Mrs. Carl E. Melugin        | San Francisco         | Mrs. John I. Walter    |
| George E. Steinmetz         | Danville              | David Magee            |
| Miss Grace Margaret Webster | San Francisco         | Constance Spencer      |
| Burlingame Public Library   | Burlingame            | Mrs. Elizabeth Downs   |



*Just Published*

THE INDIANS OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA IN 1852: The B. D.  
Wilson Report and a Selection of Contemporary Comment,  
ed. by John Walton Caughey..... 3.50\*

*Ready about November 1*

MUSIC IN THE SOUTHWEST, 1825-1950, by Howard Swan.  
About 315 pages, illustrated..... 5.00\*

### *Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery*

San Marino 9, California

\**California purchasers please add 3% Sales Tax*

### *The Western Gate*

#### A SAN FRANCISCO READER

*Edited by Joseph Henry Jackson*

Mr. Jackson has compiled a collection that gives a panoramic view of our colorful city. The book contains prose and poetry, fact and fiction and takes the reader from the town of Yerba Buena to present day San Francisco. It is an unusual collection and will be an invaluable addition to your library. Autographed copies of the first edition are available. \$4.75 plus 17 cents tax in S. F., 14 cents elsewhere in California.

*Please send your order to*

CONSTANCE SPENCER  
470 Post Street, San Francisco 2  
*Telephone EXbrook 2-4229*

*Whatever your collecting interests, you will enjoy browsing through our tremendous stock of new, rare, and out-of-print books.*

CATALOGUES ISSUED : CORRESPONDENCE INVITED

WESTERN AMERICANA

*The Holmes Book Company*

ESTABLISHED 1894

274 - 14th Street, Oakland 4. Phone TWInoaks 3-6860

*A unique and uniquely useful book*

# **ABC FOR BOOK-COLLECTORS**

*by JOHN CARTER*

author of *Taste and Technique in Book-Collecting*

A practical and entertaining dictionary of the words and phrases commonly used in book-collecting. From terms such as "advance copy" and "yapp, yapp edges" to "yellow-back," one of the foremost authorities in the field discusses everything the novice, would-be collector, or educated reader needs to know about the bibliophiles' world.

\$3.00 at all bookstores

**AAKCO ALFRED A. KNOPF, Publisher AAKCO**